

Into the Deep

Issue 123

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A Child Who is God

Pope Benedict XVI, Christmas Eve homily 2011

“A child is born for us, a son given to us and dominion is laid on his shoulders; and this is the name they give him: Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace. Wide is his dominion in a peace that has no end” (Isaiah 9:5f).

Whether the prophet had a particular child in mind, born during his own period of history, we do not know. But it seems impossible. This is the only text in the Old Testament in which it is said of a child, of a human being: his name will be Mighty-God, Eternal-Father. We are presented with a vision that extends far beyond the historical moment into the mysterious, into the future. A child, in all its weakness, is Mighty God. A child, in all its neediness and dependence, is Eternal Father. And his peace “has no end”.

www.zenit.org 24-12-2011

Cherish the Rosary

Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus address 07-10-2012

I would like to invite everyone to cherish the Rosary during the forthcoming Year of Faith. With the Rosary, in fact, we allow ourselves to be guided by Mary, the model of faith, in meditating upon the mysteries of Christ, and day after day we are helped to assimilate the Gospel so that it can shape our lives. Therefore, in the wake of my predecessors, and in particular Blessed John Paul II who ten years ago gave us his Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, I invite people to pray the Rosary individually, in the family and in the community, placing themselves in the school of Mary who leads us to Christ, the living centre of our faith.

Vatican Information Service 07-10-2012

Bend Low

Pope Benedict XVI, Christmas Eve homily 2011

Today, anyone wishing to enter the Church of Jesus' Nativity in Bethlehem will find that the doorway five and a half metres high, through which emperors and caliphs used to enter the building, is now largely walled up. Only a low opening of one and a half metres has remained. The intention was probably to provide the church with better protection from attack, but above all to prevent people from entering God's house on horseback. Anyone wishing to enter the place of Jesus' birth has to bend down.

It seems to me that a deeper truth is revealed here, which should touch our hearts on this holy night: if we want to find the God who appeared as a child, then we must dismount from the high horse of our “enlightened” reason. We must set aside our false certainties, our intellectual pride, which prevents us from recognizing God's closeness. ... We must bend down; spiritually we must, as it were, go on foot, in order to pass through the portal of faith and encounter the God who is so different from our prejudices and opinions – the God who conceals himself in the humility of a newborn baby.

In this spirit let us celebrate the liturgy of the holy night, let us strip away our fixation on what is material, on what can be measured and grasped.

Let us allow ourselves to be made simple by the God who reveals himself to the simple of heart.

And let us also pray especially at this hour for all who have to celebrate Christmas in poverty, in suffering, as migrants, that a ray of God's kindness may shine upon them, that they – and we – may be touched by the kindness that God chose to bring into the world through the birth of his Son in a stable. Amen.

www.zenit.org 24-12-2011

Christ said, “I am the Truth”; he did not say “I am the custom”.

St Toribio

All issues of *Into the Deep* are at www.stoneswillshout.com

Giving Love, Giving All

St John of Avila, Doctor of the Church

That which most moves our heart to love God is the profound consideration of the love he had for us ...

This, more than the benefits we receive from him, moves the heart to love;

because he who gives some good to another gives him something that he has;

but he who loves, gives himself with everything he has, so that he has nothing else to give.

Witnesses of the Light

Pope Benedict XVI, 11-12-2011

Advent is a time of waiting, hope and preparation for the visit of the Lord.

The person and preaching of John the Baptist invite us to take up this commitment. ...

John the Baptist is a witness of the light. This fact touches our hearts, because in a world so full of shadows and darkness, we are all called to be witnesses of the light.

This is the mission of Advent: being witness of the light, and we can do this only if we carry the light within us. ... In the Church, in the Word of God, in the celebration of the Sacraments, in the Sacrament of Confession and the forgiveness we receive, in the Eucharist where the Lord gives Himself into our hands and hearts, in of all this we touch the light and receive our mission: the mission of bearing witness to the fact that the light exists, of bringing that light into our world.

Vatican Information Service 11-12-2011

The Significance of Sunday Mass

Pope Benedict XVI, 11-12-2011

I also wish to draw your attention to the importance and the central role of the Eucharist.

May the Mass be the focus of your Sunday, which must be rediscovered and lived as the day of the Lord and of the community, a day on which to praise and celebrate the One Who was born for us, Who died and rose again for our salvation, and Who asks us to live together joyfully, to be a community open and ready to welcome anyone who is alone and in difficulty.

Do not lose your understanding of the significance of Sundays, and remain faithful to your appointment with the Eucharist. Early Christians were ready to give their lives for this.

Vatican Information Service 11-12-2011

Sale Priests Targeted Again

A letter written in the Gippsland Times, 13-11-2012, by R. Coombe of Sale, states that s/he attended two funerals recently. One was “an absolute joy”, where the wonderful life of his/her saintly friend was celebrated and where there were eulogies from her children. The other was an “atrocious”, I gather because of the homily or comments made by the Catholic priest. According to the letter, the priest “made reference to how often we attended church as opposed to how we live our lives. If we didn’t attend frequently we were penalised, openly stated by our priest.”

Perhaps the priest in question was preaching what the Church teaches; which seems to scare people these days.

Of course eulogies are always filled with lots of pleasantries and memories, but no-one is guaranteed Heaven despite living a life of goodness. Goodness is not enough. Jesus says, “No-one can come to the Father except through Me” and to do this we must strive to live holy lives, receiving the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist regularly and that means keeping our obligation to Sunday Mass. This *is* Church Teaching.

Who are we to judge who is a saint or not? God is the only Judge, and we have to account for ourselves to Him and Him alone, face to face.

People all too often want to hear those sweet words that our loved one has gone to Heaven. The priest himself cannot claim that – he has a duty to his priesthood and to the Church to deliver the truth. The best we can do for our loved ones is scrap the eulogy and pray that a Holy Mass is offered.

Coombe’s letter ends with: “The Catholic Church has a lot to answer for – using draconian measures to intimidate the congregation was not the answer then and in 2012 is laughable. No wonder the Catholic Church is losing its flock in droves.”

I don’t understand why issues such as these are brought to attention through a secular newspaper. It shows R. Coombe’s ignorance of Catholic teaching and contempt for the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church doesn’t have to answer to anything – we are the ones responsible for our own choices in our lives; yes, we have freedom to choose and the real reason, in my opinion, the Church is losing its flock is due solely to some bishops, priests, religious orders and Catholic school teachers who have had the responsibility to teach the faith of the Church in its truthfulness, but have failed miserably and have created confusion over the years.

My condolences to the families involved and if you have the Church’s faith you’ll know in your heart that God is All Loving and Merciful and He will guide your loved one, if it is their choice to go with Him. May you all find comfort in the Lord’s Mercy.

Josie Vitale, Morwell

In Defence of Our Bishop

As John Loughnan ('Sinners in the Church', ITD Nov 2012, p.8) points out, the Church is both Divine and Human. We are all sinners, including the popes and bishops. They need our prayers to work with their wayward flocks.

Our diocese, like most others, has a lot of powerful modernists – wolves in sheep's clothing – as John Henderson makes abundantly clear in his article 'Controversies and Contradictions' (ITD Nov 2012, p.9).

At least our bishop has placed himself in the thick of it on the same campus as the Catholic Education Office at Warragul. As Our Dear Lord Himself, and our own good priests, like Fr Speekman and Fr Wise know, it is not winning the battle that is important. It is the battle itself. Do not be afraid and don't give up. With prayer, fasting, sacrifice and penance nothing is impossible to God and in the end Mary's Immaculate Heart will triumph.

Recently when I sent our Bishop my comments on the clergy discussion on Parishes in Partnership, I also mentioned that I had heard that Fr John would never get another Parish. The Bishop always replies courteously and promptly to my letters. This is what he said: "Fr John Speekman continues to be a priest in good standing in the Diocese of Sale and therefore will always be available for an appointment by the Bishop. Any other comments are clearly of the gossip variety! Thank you for your continued prayers for my ministry as Bishop of Sale".

Richard Earle, Marlo, Vic

Just Another Day For Some

With Christmas on our doorstep, just thought I would put pen to paper and share a thought with you. The first Sunday of Advent is not far away and the joy of Christmas will be with us. A most innocent child, in fact the Christ Child, has come to us, born in a stable on Christmas morn. The Holy Blessed Virgin Mary gave birth to the Divine Infant, and St Joseph watched over them as a father, given the task to care for Our Mother Mary and Jesus.

After speaking to my own family on the love and care our parents gave us, I thought sadly of many families who do not experience such good parents. To many, Christmas is just another day. One's heart goes out to them.

Also, as we know, He came on earth to impart love, goodwill and peace to all. I wish all the readers of Into the Deep a very happy peaceful Christmas, and in particular the people who put it all together.

Peter Duyndam, Newborough, Vic

Imposing Their Morality

Many non-religious people today think they can find happiness by deciding what is right and wrong themselves (relativism) and protest that Christians want "to impose their morality" on them.

But the greatest danger to society is not from Christian beliefs which have given us our freedom and rights, but from secular atheistic beliefs which will not tolerate any dissent at all from their tenets, and demand total compliance or else! (totalitarianism)

Religion has been almost silenced in the Western world because our public institutions, parliaments, the judiciary, the media, the universities and schools etc. keep a strict adherence to atheistic materialism, the "zeitgeist", the spirit of the times, to which they are slaves, and which is not our common heritage. They want an easier life.

In today's spirit, there is hardly a reference to the full narrative of our culture, of the well-grounded transcendent beliefs we have in our origin, destiny and Judeo-Christian morality – proved over time, to be the natural law basis of our freedoms, duties, rights, prosperity and the developments of all our Arts, Music, Literature and Sciences – much to the chagrin of Chinese and Muslim experts in their objective analyses of this heritage on several occasions.

Secular materialists think they alone have discovered the key to full truth and happiness by reducing human nature, marriage, family etc. to mere arbitrary "social constructs" – as if they know better than the wisdom of the ages.

Our Judeo-Christian culture has certainly been tempered and often enhanced by Greco-Roman, Enlightenment, Reformation and scientific influences but the basic consensus – of the narrative and morality has never been replaced because it is the objective truth of natural law, instinct and experience.

Our deepest yearnings are for the culture of truth, beauty, goodness, true love and unending life – and not for the debased culture of greed, envy, lust, hatred, violence and death which are the results of those who are slaves to the compulsion of self-indulgence.

God save us from this hell on earth.

Fr Bernard McGrath, Bendigo, Vic

Christmas

St Leo the Great

Today the Maker of the world was born of a Virgin's womb, and He, who made all natures, became the Son of her, whom He created. Today the Word of God appeared clothed in flesh, and That which had never been visible to human eyes began to be tangible to our hands as well.

The Seal of Confession

By Fr John Flader, *Catholic Weekly*

Q: If the government passes a law requiring priests to inform the police or to testify in court about any serious matters they hear in confession, what will happen? Will priests comply?

A: This issue has suddenly leapt into the public arena with respect to the sexual abuse issue, so it is important to be acquainted with some facts.

First, the requirement that priests never divulge to anyone what they hear in confession is known as the seal of confession. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says of it: "Given the delicacy and greatness of this ministry and the respect due to persons, the Church declares that every priest who hears confessions is bound under very severe penalties to keep absolute secrecy regarding the sins that his penitents have confessed to him. He can make no use of knowledge that confession gives him about penitents' lives. This secret, which admits of no exceptions, is called the 'sacramental seal', because what the penitent has made known to the priest remains 'sealed' by the sacrament" (CCC 1467).

The Code of Canon Law is equally clear: "The sacramental seal is inviolable. Accordingly, it is absolutely wrong for a confessor in any way to betray the penitent, for any reason whatsoever, whether by word or in any other fashion" (Can. 983 §1). The following Canon adds: "The confessor is wholly forbidden to use knowledge acquired in confession to the detriment of the penitent, even when all danger of disclosure is excluded" (Can. 984 §1).

What are the "severe penalties" for violating the seal? "A confessor who directly violates the sacramental seal, incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See; he who does so only indirectly is to be punished according to the gravity of the offence" (Can. 1388 §1).

A *latae sententiae* penalty is one which a person incurs by the mere fact of violating the law. It does not need to be declared by a bishop. So if a priest were to violate the seal, he would be automatically and immediately excommunicated, by the law itself.

The effect of excommunication is that the priest cannot celebrate Mass, celebrate or receive any sacrament, including the sacrament of Penance, or exercise his priestly ministry until such time as he repents and does what he can to make up for the offence (cf. Can. 1331 §1).

What is more, in this case the lifting of the excommunication and granting of absolution are reserved to the Holy See. Only a few extremely grave sins carry with them the penalty of excommunication

reserved to the Holy See and this is one of them.

What do we make of this? That the Church regards the violation of the confessional seal as an extremely grave matter. All priests know this, and therefore they will not divulge to the police or say in court anything they have heard in the course of a confession. If they are put in jail for this, they will happily go to jail.

Why is it so serious? Because if the Church did not protect the confidentiality of what is said in confession, people would not trust their priests and they would not confess anything that might incriminate them. Just as they trust their doctor, psychologist, lawyer or counsellor to respect their confidentiality, so all the more they trust their priest. People would stop going to confession if the seal were not respected.

Moreover, paedophiles and other people with serious problems would not go to confession for fear the confessor would take the matter to the police. They would thereby deprive themselves of a very valuable aid in overcoming their sinful habit.

But if a paedophile confesses this most serious sin, shouldn't the priest be able to take some action? Yes, and he will. He will strongly urge the person to take action to address his problem: to seek professional help, to resign his position, to inform the relevant people and possibly even to give himself up to the police. The confessor may also ask the penitent for permission to reveal to others – for example, the person's superior, a counsellor, even the police – that he has this problem. But without this permission the confessor cannot disclose anything he has heard.

And of course, if he sees that the paedophile is not sorry for what he has done and is not taking appropriate action to address his problem, the confessor can refuse to absolve him.

In short, the sacramental seal is extremely important for everyone, and the Church will never change its law or make exceptions to it. We can all breathe a sigh of relief.

catholicweekly.com.au, 25-11-2012

Prepared to Break It

Retired Bishop Geoffrey Robinson in an interview with Tim Palmer on ABC Radio, 14-11-2012

"I would be prepared to break the seal of confessional [*sic*] because you have to weigh up the greatest good, and here, the greatest good is surely the protection of innocent people."

www.abc.net.au/pm

Immaculate Conception

Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus address, 08-12-2010

In the liturgy of this feast, the Gospel of the Annunciation is proclaimed, which presents, precisely, the dialogue between the angel Gabriel and the Virgin.

“Rejoice! Full of grace, the Lord is with thee,” says God’s messenger, and in this way reveals Mary’s most profound identity, the “name” so to speak with which God himself knows her: “full of grace.”

This expression, which is so familiar to us from our childhood, as we say it every time we pray the Hail Mary, explains to us the mystery that we celebrate today. In fact, from the moment she was conceived by her parents, Mary was the object of a singular predilection on the part of God, who in his eternal plan chose her to be the mother of his Son made man and, hence, preserved her from original sin. For this reason, the angel addresses her with this name, which implicitly signifies: “ever full of the love of God,” of his grace.

The mystery of the Immaculate Conception is source of interior light, of hope and of consolation. In the midst of life’s trials, and especially of the contradictions man experiences in his interior and around him, Mary, Mother of Christ, tells us that Grace is greater than sin, that God’s mercy is more powerful than evil, and it is able to transform it into goodness.

Unfortunately, we experience evil every day, which manifests itself in many ways in relations and events, but which has its root in man’s heart, a wounded, sick heart, incapable of curing itself. Sacred Scripture reveals to us that at the origin of all evil is disobedience to the will of God, and that death has prevailed because human liberty has yielded to the temptation of the Evil One.

However, God does not fail in his plan of love and life: through a long and patient path of reconciliation, he has prepared the new and eternal Covenant, sealed with the blood of his Son, who to offer himself in expiation “was born of woman” (Gal 4:4).

This woman, the Virgin Mary, benefited in advance from the redeeming death of her Son and from conception was preserved from the contagion of guilt. Because of this, with her immaculate heart, she says to us: Trust Jesus, he saves you.

www.zenit.org 08-12-2010

January Issue of ITD

A reminder that the January issue of ITD is always later than usual in being mailed out, due to our printers being closed over the Christmas/New Year break. Emailed copies and website will not be affected.

- Ed.

Royal Commission Irony

I find it richly ironic that our Prime Minister, who heads a government that shores up the Kabul government which does little or nothing for Afghanistan’s children who suffer from serious child abuse, then initiated a royal commission into the sexual abuse of (some) children in Australia.

In Afghanistan, 30% of children are involved in child labour, while 43% of girls are married while underage. Girls are bought from within Afghanistan and trafficked through Pakistan for destinations in the Gulf, Iran, and elsewhere to be wives or prostitutes. Trafficking victims of sexual exploitation face societal discrimination if ever able to return to their home villages. According to reports from the field, young boys are trafficked as well.

How can I possibly take serious a ‘royal-commission favouring’ PM whose government stubbornly supports Afghanistan’s leaders who appear unwilling to change the ghastly lot of much of Afghanistan’s youth?

Those who think that a royal commission into child sexual abuse will be able to weed out the practice are engaged in wishful thinking, especially when one considers that our society has been moving towards one that has a strong resemblance to that of pagan Rome as it was up to 312 AD, the year that Emperor Constantine adopted Christianity.

Up to Constantine’s reign, the Roman Empire’s state-sponsored culture had affirmed same-sex marriage, homosexual practices, pornography, abortion, pederasty (sexual relations between a male adult and a boy), and much more.

For the sake of truth and justice, will a royal commission also examine public and other non-Catholic schools, secular and religious institutions, families, sporting-bodies, clubs, babysitters et cetera? In short, all persons and entities that deal with the underage members of our society?

Henk Verhoeven, Beacon Hill, NSW

Prepare Inside Too

Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience 22-12-2010

May the Child Jesus, in coming to us, not find us unprepared, busy only in making the exterior reality more beautiful and attractive. May the care we give to making our streets and homes more resplendent impel us even more to predispose our soul to encounter him who will come to visit us. Let us purify our conscience and our life of what is contrary to this coming: thoughts, words, attitudes and deeds – impelling us to do good and to contribute to bring about in our world peace and justice for every man and thus walk toward our encounter with the Lord.

www.zenit.org 22-12-2010

Fix Your Schools First

Before Vatican II, the world knew what the Church believed and taught. Catholics knew with certainty what the life of Christ in his Church demanded of them. They faithfully practised their faith in accordance with the commandments of the Church. They knew that Sunday Mass lies at the very heart of the Church's identity and is the source of her evangelizing mission in the world. When the Church spoke the world listened because she was respected.

Fifty years after Vatican II and there is disease in the Church, to the point that she is visibly dying in some parts of world. And, while governments no longer respect her and are becoming more and more intolerant of her values, atheist and Protestants sit around on national television and debate whether she is a force for good or evil in our world.

The Pope's opening address at the Synod on the New Evangelization summarily placed the cause for this sick state of the Church at the feet of the Bishops, the primary evangelizers, when he made the point that the new evangelization has to start with them, their own personal conversion, if it is going to be credible and effective. He knows only too well that it is the bishops who are the main carriers of these sickening diseases – their lack of leadership, their policies and programmes that have brought about the current state.

He knows that many of them have been using the ambiguities of various documents of the Council to replace the Church's evangelizing mission with a false ecumenism and religious pluralism. And that many of them have been preaching accommodation, compromise, tolerance and self-consciousness instead of conversion and holiness of life.

The Pope called to mind the great evangelizers of the past, men and woman who were themselves first profoundly evangelized. These were people of constant prayer, conversion and communion even when engaging in the most absorbing tasks. They lived their consecration devoted to the Father, united to Christ and enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

Here in the predominantly liberal protestant 'Church of Australia' the biggest monument that bears testimony to the bishops' lack of leadership is the gigantic mess that is Catholic education.

And it is not only Catholic education but other pastoral areas as well that many of our bishops have failed as primary evangelizers by appointing unevangelized people to positions of leadership and ministry in their own diocesan curia.

Until they lead by fixing Catholic schools, changing the way their dioceses sacramentalize, and being more discerning in their appointments, they will have very little, if any, credibility in relation to any form of evangelization.

Gregory Kingman, Morwell

Not Far-Fetched

Marriage in Australia is fairly simple – one goes to a government-approved celebrant, who may be religious or non-religious (i.e. civil). Only one ceremony is allowed, even for couples of mixed faiths. Celebrants are not under any obligation to marry anyone.

In most countries, even nominally Catholic ones, two ceremonies may be required – one to effect registration of the marriage with the civil authority, which regulates these matters, and if desired, one with the religious authority to affirm faith for divine blessing for a future married life.

I have often wondered why Australia seems to be the only country to do things the way it does, where the civil and religious thing is done by one act, and how long it can last this way.

The aggressive push by the homosexual lobby will have the effect that religious celebrants will be obliged by law to marry all sorts, those whom they would not and cannot now marry. This will result in the danger, already foreseen by many, that attempts to act according to Christian principles in the administration of the sacraments will be deemed "hate speech", and will be illegal.

In effect, it will be too dangerous to celebrate any sacrament or religious ceremony under any but the most stringently secret conditions, as even those who attend the ceremony will be liable to prosecution also. This is a reversion to the intolerance of Elizabethan England, where public display of one's Catholic faith was banned.

If you think this scenario is far-fetched, consider that the new Archbishop of Glasgow has already publicly stated, on Scottish Television News (24-07-2012) that he can foresee himself in jail sometime during the years to come, for just this. Only a few years ago a French edition of the Bible was declared to contain "hate speech", and the courts required the withdrawal of the whole edition. These are the days that are upon us, and we must take that preventative action still possible for us.

The media is probably our greatest enemy, as it powerfully promotes dangerous ideas without regard for social consequences. Now we have to make the reasonable voice of religion heard, or pay the consequences.

S.C., Melbourne

“The climax of the love story between God and man passes by way of the manger of Bethlehem and the sepulcher of Jerusalem.”

Pope Benedict XVI, 21-12-2011

It is Beautiful to be Elderly!

Pope Benedict XVI at the "Viva gli Anziani" Retirement home, Rome, 12-11-2012

I am truly happy to be with you in this Retirement Home...

I come among you as Bishop of Rome, but also as an elderly man visiting his peers. I know well the difficulties, the problems and the limits of this age, and I know that for many, these difficulties are aggravated by the economic crisis. Sometimes, at a certain age, one looks to the past recalling when one was young, enjoyed fresh energies, made plans for the future. So, at times, our look is clouded by sadness, considering this phase of life as the time of decline. This morning, ideally addressing all the elderly, in the awareness also of the difficulties that our age entails, I would like to say to you with profound conviction: it is beautiful to be elderly! It is necessary to discover in every age the presence and blessing of the Lord and the riches it contains. We must never let ourselves be imprisoned by sadness! We received the gift of a long life. It is lovely to live also at our age, despite some "aches and pains" and some limitations. On our face there must always be the joy of feeling ourselves loved by God, never sadness.

In the Bible, longevity is considered a blessing of God; today this blessing has spread and must be seen as a gift to appreciate and value. Yet often society, dominated by the logic of efficiency and profit, does not receive it as such, instead it often rejects it, regarding the elderly as non-productive, useless. Felt many times is the suffering of those that are marginalized, who live far from their home or in loneliness. I think that we should act with greater commitment, beginning with families and public institutions, so that the elderly are able to stay in their own homes. The wisdom of life, of which they are bearers, is a great richness. The quality of a society, I would say of a civilization, is also judged by the way the elderly are treated and the place given to them in ordinary living. Those who make room for the elderly make room for life! Those who receive the elderly receive life! ...

When life becomes fragile, in the years of old age, it never loses its value and its dignity: each one of us, in whatever stage of existence, is wanted and loved by God, each one is important and necessary ...

the elderly are a value for society, especially for the young. There cannot be real human growth and education without a fruitful contact with the elderly, because their very existence is like an open book in which the young generations can find precious directions for life's journey.

Dear friends, at our age we often experience the need of others' help; and this is true also for the Pope. We read in the Gospel that Jesus said to the Apostle Peter:

"when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go" (*John 21:18*). The Lord was referring to the way in which the Apostle would witness his faith unto martyrdom, but this phrase makes us reflect on the fact that the need for help is a condition of the elderly. I would like to invite you to see also in this a gift of the Lord, because it is a grace to be supported and accompanied, to feel the affection of others! This is important in every phase of life: no one can live alone and without help; the human being is relational. ...

Dear elderly sisters and brothers, sometimes the days seem long and empty, with difficulties, few obligations and meetings; never be discouraged: you are a richness for society, also in suffering and in sickness. And this phase of life is also a gift to deepen your relationship with God. The example of Blessed John Paul II was and still is illuminating for all. Do not forget that among the precious resources that you have is the essential one of prayer: become intercessors before God, praying with faith and constancy. Pray for the Church, also for me, for the needs of the world, for the poor, that there be no more violence in the world. The prayer of the elderly can protect the world, helping it, perhaps, in a more incisive way than the anxiety of so many. I would like to entrust to your prayer today the well-being of the Church and the peace of the world. The Pope loves you and counts on all of you! Feel yourselves loved by God and be able to bring to our society, often so individualistic and efficient, a ray of the love of God. And God will be with you always and with all those who support you with their affection and help.

www.zenit.org 13-11-2012

Spreading the Word

I came across your website via the Catholic Citizens of Illinois newsletter. Please enter my subscription to your site. Reading the excellent article by Bert Van Galen entitled, 'What Is Chosen Can Also Be Forsaken' in *Into the Deep* caught my interest (Nov ITD, p.4, reprinted in Catholic Citizens of Illinois newsletter).

I'm Roman Catholic, live in Ohio, USA, and was fortunate enough to have been born pre-Vatican II when the Tridentine Mass was the norm. I am all for restoring reverence and awe in the universal Church to the practice of Roman Catholicism.

Gail Talarico, Ohio, USA

Speak to St Joseph

Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus address 18-12-2005

In these last days of Advent the liturgy invites us to contemplate in a special way the Virgin Mary and St Joseph, who lived with unique intensity the period of expectation and preparation for Jesus' birth. ...

[Joseph] was the model of a "just" man (Mt 1:19) who, in perfect harmony with his wife, welcomed the Son of God made man and watched over his human growth.

It is therefore particularly appropriate in the days that precede Christmas to establish a sort of spiritual conversation with St Joseph, so that he may help us live to the full this great mystery of faith. ...

Let us allow ourselves to be "filled" with St Joseph's silence! In a world that is often too noisy, that encourages neither recollection nor listening to God's voice, we are in such deep need of it. During this season of preparation for Christmas, let us cultivate inner recollection in order to welcome and cherish Jesus in our own lives.

Vatican Information Service

Is God Good?

Pope Benedict XVI, Christmas Eve homily 2011

Formerly, people had spoken of God and formed human images of him in all sorts of different ways. God himself had spoken in many and various ways to mankind. But now something new has happened: he has appeared. He has revealed himself. He has emerged from the inaccessible light in which he dwells. He himself has come into our midst. This was the great joy of Christmas for the early Church: God has appeared. No longer is he merely an idea, no longer do we have to form a picture of him on the basis of mere words. He has "appeared".

But now we ask: how has he appeared? Who is he in reality? The reading at the Dawn Mass goes on to say: "the kindness and love of God our Saviour for mankind were revealed" (Tit 3:4). For the people of pre-Christian times, whose response to the terrors and contradictions of the world was to fear that God himself might not be good either, that he too might well be cruel and arbitrary, this was a real "epiphany", the great light that has appeared to us: God is pure goodness.

Today too, people who are no longer able to recognize God through faith are asking whether the ultimate power that underpins and sustains the world is truly good, or whether evil is just as powerful and primordial as the good and the beautiful which we encounter in radiant moments in our world. "The kindness and love of God our Saviour for mankind were revealed": this is the new, consoling certainty that is granted to us at Christmas.

www.zenit.org 24-12-2011

Cremation

From an interview by ZENIT with Capuchin Friar Luca Casalicchio, who is in charge of Rome's El Verano Cemetery

The Church, who at first did not accept cremation, now does. Why?

Today cremation has lost the ideological characterization it had years ago as opposition to the idea of the resurrection and of man's religious dimension. Moreover, there is a practical need. For example, here in this cemetery of El Verano, one can only be placed if one has an ancient tomb, but sometimes it's not known how much space there is, thus the funeral urn is a solution as there is always a place available for it.

Cremation before the funeral is allowed only in very particular situations, such as in cases of deaths abroad, as the transportation of the body is complex and it also means economic difficulty. Thus, the transportation of ashes is very simple, both from an economic standpoint as well as a bureaucratic point of view.

But there are some concrete suggestions?

The Church recommends one thing: the cremation must take place only after the funeral. To do it before the funeral, there must be an exception, as in the examples I just mentioned. And just like the coffin, the ashes must be accompanied to the cemetery by an ordained minister, with prayers and a prayer when the urn is placed in the tomb.

Is it an obligation or a recommendation?

The State [Italy] allows one to take them to one's home, or that the ashes be scattered, etc. The Church, instead, asks for respect for the body of the deceased, and even if it is reduced to ashes it must be kept in a cemetery. For the Church, it is not right to take home the urn with the ashes.

In the case of the funeral rite, when the deceased is already ash in the urn, the Church does not provide either the incense or the aspersion, as opposed to what is done with the coffin, in order to emphasize the difference between the body and the ashes.

What does your experience tell you about cremation?

Something that caught my attention particularly is that many persons feel guilty for having cremated their loved ones, because they have the impression that violence has been done to their bodies, although cremation accelerates a natural process that lasts between 15 and 20 years and sometimes longer.

Because after leaving the body of a loved one they find his ashes in a receptacle, and sometimes this creates a strong trauma in persons who then accentuate their feeling of guilt. My experience indicates that many times words of consolation must be said to the living to console them in face of what they have experienced.

www.zenit.org 02-11-2012

Clergy Discussion on Parishes in Partnership

In Orbost we were asked for a response to the "Discussion on 'Parishes in Partnership'" document from the Clergy Assembly Day in Warragul on 25-09-2012. Here is mine for what it's worth. [edited]

The document's opening sentence states: "A decision needs to be reached as to whether we wish to progress to forming a number of Mega parishes in the Diocese, or whether we retain individual parishes but look at forming clusters of parishes."

The sentence states that you "wish to progress...". Your proffered solution to the decreasing number of active priests and dwindling, ageing congregations is what amounts to gradual liquidation by suggesting Mega parishes or clusters of parishes. This is defeatism or capitulation, not progress. ...

Surely we should go to the root of the problem. As Catholics we have the answer but we are too comfortable or not brave enough, or lacking in faith and hope. ...

The hope-filled solution to the Church's ills is embracing the Truth. Our God is both a God of Love and Mercy, and a God of Justice. He knows our problems and our sins. He has done, and continues to do all He can to help us but for the most part we either ignore or defy Him.

It has been said that what distinguishes true Catholics from other Christians is their devotion to: a) the Pope and the Magisterium; b) Our Lady; c) the Eucharist.

In most of our Australian (and Western) churches only lip service is paid to these essentials. Jesus has sent His Mother at Fatima and elsewhere to show us that the Devil and Hell do exist and many souls go there. Jesus wants His and Our Mother's Immaculate Heart to triumph and for souls to be saved, but most of our bishops and priests are not speaking out or setting us an example.

The Clergy Discussion proffers the 'solution' of Mega-parishes or clusters of parishes. The sad fact is that overall only about 10% of baptised Catholics attend Sunday Mass regularly. Most of these are elderly. Only 3-4% of the product of our so-called Catholic schools do.

The solution that is working and is not only keeping Christ's church alive but helping it to grow is manifest. Here are some examples:

a) Both Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI have been and are being persecuted for promoting the truth and the dogmas and teaching of the Catholic Church e.g. outspoken against women priests, contraception, abortion, euthanasia, same sex marriages, liberation theology, communism, masonry and moral relativism; encouraging the Catechism of the Catholic church,

reform of the liturgy, daily Mass where possible, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and daily prayer, especially the rosary.

b) St Alphonsus Liguori once said that devotion to Our Lady is essential for our salvation. She is not only Mother of the Church but the Mother of All Peoples, Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate. No one loves Her more than Jesus and He has sent Her to Fatima, Akita, and many other places with the 'recipe' to bring back faith and peace to our world overrun by the "errors of Russia" (i.e. atheistic materialism or secular humanism). Our Lady has said that there is no problem on earth that cannot be solved by priests and families leading the people and children in the daily Rosary.

c) In the Gospel of John, (ch 6) when our Lord says to his disciples that "unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man... you will not have life within you", many left. Sadly, today research shows that at least half of our priests do not believe in the Real Presence. Even those that say they believe barely respect Jesus' Real Presence in the Tabernacle and do not encourage silence and prayers of thanksgiving after Mass, neither do they promote Eucharistic adoration and lead by example. Conversely, those few bishops and priests that do have adoration, especially perpetual adoration, have far more practising Catholics and a surge in priestly and religious vocations. Regular adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the daily rosary, encouraged and led by our priests is, in a nutshell, the solution to our rapidly declining church attendance and shortage of priests.

d) A fourth, difficult but very important reform so urgently needed is in Catholic education. Sadly, "he who pays the piper calls the tune". Our secular humanist government makes it impossible to make our schools truly Catholic again. This does not mean that good bishops, priests and teachers haven't tried. Most Catholic teachers nowadays are themselves the product of Catholic schools and do not, for the most part, know or believe the dogmas and teachings of our Catholic faith e.g. that contraception and missing Mass on Sundays are mortally sinful. Soon, if not already, the government will force all schools, including Catholic schools, to teach explicit sex education to all students and that abortion and alternative lifestyles are a matter of 'choice'. There are a couple of brave dioceses in Australia that have simply started again with genuine Catholic schools. These and the home-schooling parents, usually with big families, are producing practising, committed and informed young Catholics and it is from these that we are getting vocations and good Catholic families.

Richard Earle, St Colman's Parish, Orbost

Depravity

Who would've thought it would be necessary for a government to ban sex with animals? But it's happening obviously. According to an article in *The Age*, currently in Germany bestiality is only banned if someone has sex with an animal that is injured, but now they want to ban the practice altogether (theage.com.au 27-11-2012). The new law would also ban "animal brothels".

A group of "zoophiles" in Germany is threatening legal action because they claim they treat the animals ethically and only have sex with them if they are sure it's consensual. The chairman of the group is quoted as saying that "perceptions of morality have no place in law".

When you shut God out of society, and take sex out of marriage, there is no end to the depravity that follows.

- Ed.

Bishop Shows Contempt for Cardinal Pell

Retired Bishop Geoffrey Robinson in an interview with Tim Palmer on ABC Radio, 14-11-2012

"He's not a team player, he never has been. So he doesn't work with the other Australian bishops, he does his own thing. When the office of president was vacant some years ago, and they had an election for a new president, I know for a fact that he got six votes out of 42, and that gives you a pretty fair thing."

"Now on this subject too, he's not consulting with anyone else, he's simply doing his own thing. I personally believe he's doing it very badly indeed and I think the other Australian bishops, it's one of the very first questions they need to face. They've got to confront him and determine who it is who speaks in their name and who doesn't."

"I have to say that on this subject, he's a great embarrassment to me and to a lot of good Catholic people."

www.abc.net.au/pm

Prepare with Prayer

Pope Benedict XVI, 11-12-2011

We know that Christmas is approaching so let us prepare ourselves, not just with gifts but with our hearts. Let us think that Christ the Lord is close to us, that He enters our lives and brings us light and joy. 'Pray incessantly' says St Paul. ... What this means is that we must not lose contact with God in our hearts. If such contact exists then we have a reason to be joyful. To all of you I wish the joy of Christmas, the presence of the Baby Jesus Who is the God of our hearts.

Vatican Information Service 11-12-2011

Not About Sentimentality

Pope Benedict XVI, Christmas Eve homily 2011

In 1223, when Saint Francis of Assisi celebrated Christmas in Greccio with an ox and an ass and a manger full of hay, a new dimension of the mystery of Christmas came to light.

Saint Francis of Assisi called Christmas "the feast of feasts" – above all other feasts – and he celebrated it with "unutterable devotion" (Thomas of Celano).

For the early Church, the feast of feasts was Easter: in the Resurrection Christ had flung open the doors of death and in so doing had radically changed the world: he had made a place for man in God himself.

Now Francis neither changed nor intended to change this objective order of precedence among the feasts... And yet through him and the character of his faith, something new took place: Francis discovered Jesus' humanity in an entirely new depth. This human existence of God became most visible to him at the moment when God's Son, born of the Virgin Mary, was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. ... In the child born in the stable at Bethlehem we can, as it were, touch and caress God. And so the liturgical year acquired a second focus in a feast that is above all a feast of the heart.

This has nothing to do with sentimentality. It is right here, in this new experience of the reality of Jesus' humanity that the great mystery of faith is revealed.

Francis loved the child Jesus, because for him it was in this childish estate that God's humility shone forth. God became poor. His Son was born in the poverty of the stable. In the child Jesus, God made himself dependent, in need of human love, he put himself in the position of asking for human love – our love.

Today Christmas has become a commercial celebration, whose bright lights hide the mystery of God's humility, which in turn calls us to humility and simplicity. Let us ask the Lord to help us see through the superficial glitter of this season, and to discover behind it the child in the stable in Bethlehem, so as to find true joy and true light.

Francis arranged for Mass to be celebrated on the manger that stood between the ox and the ass. Later, an altar was built over this manger, so that where animals had once fed on hay, men could now receive the flesh of the spotless lamb Jesus Christ, for the salvation of soul and body, as Thomas of Celano tells us. Francis himself, as a deacon, had sung the Christmas Gospel on the holy night in Greccio with resounding voice. Through the friars' radiant Christmas singing, the whole celebration seemed to be a great outburst of joy. It was the encounter with God's humility that caused this joy – his goodness creates the true feast.

www.zenit.org 24-12-2011



Christmas Quiz!



~ Circle your answers ~

Who's birth is celebrated on Christmas day?

- f) Santa Claus
- g) St Nicholas
- h) Jesus Christ



What are Christmas trees all about?

- a) the evergreen fir in winter is a sign of life
- b) the tree protects the gifts underneath it
- c) it is a protest about logging, forest regeneration and climate change

Of what faith were the Three Wise Men?

- p) Zoroastrian
- q) Christian
- r) Buddhist



Why do we give Christmas presents?



- n) to boost the economy
- o) to make people like us
- p) because the essence of Christmas is giving – God gives his greatest gift to the world

Why is Christmas on the 25th of December?

- x) because it's a public holiday
- y) to Christianise the pagan feast of the Birthday of the Sun (by celebrating the Birthday of the Son on the same day)
- z) because that's the exact date that Jesus was born

When did Christians first celebrate Christmas?

- a) the day Christ was born
- b) 75 B.C.
- c) in the early 300's



When does Advent start?

- g) when the shops start selling Christmas decorations
- h) four Sundays before Christmas
- i) 1 December

What colour is associated with Advent?

- r) purple
- s) red
- t) green



What is Advent?

- h) the period of shopping for Christmas presents
- i) the period of (spiritual) preparation for Christmas
- j) the period of (spiritual) preparation for Easter



Was Mary, the mother of Jesus, really a virgin?

- r) no, God can't do the impossible
- s) yes, Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, born of Mary – true God and true man
- t) no, she was married

When does the Christmas season start?

- r) when the shops first start selling mince pies
- s) 1 December
- t) Christmas eve, 24 December, after sunset



When does the Christmas season end?

- l) the evening of 25 December, after sunset
- m) the Sunday after 6 January (Feast of the Baptism of the Lord)
- n) after all the presents are opened

Where was Jesus born?



- a) a stable in Bethlehem
- b) an inn in Jerusalem
- c) a church in Rome



Why is Christmas such a big deal?

- q) because Jesus was such a cute baby!
- r) because Jesus was a great and holy man
- s) because Jesus is God-made-flesh: the human face of God, the divine face of man!

Answers: *Happy Christmas!*

- Ed.

Hours of Eucharistic Adoration in Gippsland

Bass	Wednesday 9.30am – 10.30am
Bairnsdale	1 st Friday after 9.10am Mass
Cowwarr-Heyfld	1 st Friday alternately: Cwr 7.30pm–8.30am Heyfield 10am – 4.30pm
Churchill	Saturday (9.30am Mass) 10am – 11am
Cranbourne	Friday and Saturday in the Church: (9.30 Mass) 10am – 11am Adoration Chapel accessible 24 hours by PIN available at parish office.
Drouin	Thursday 10am – 11am First Friday 4pm – 8pm (every second month, December onwards)
Lakes Entrance	Friday 9.30am – 11am
Moe	Wednesday (9am Mass) 9.30am – 10.30am
Morwell	Friday 6am – 6pm (Sacred Heart Church)
Orbost	Wednesday (9.30am Mass) 10am – 11am
Rosedale	First Wednesday 9.30am – 10.30am
Sale	Friday 11.30am – 12.30pm First Friday 11.30am – 4pm
Trafalgar	Wednesday and First Saturday: (9.30am Mass) 10am – 10.45am
Traralgon	Wednesday 11am – 12 noon
Warragul	Saturday 10am – 11am First Friday 4pm – 8pm (every second month, January onwards)
Wonthaggi	First Friday 7pm – 8pm

Mary, our mother

And mother of the Redeemer,
Gate of heaven and Star of the sea,
Come to the aid of your people,
Who have sinned,

Yet also yearn to rise again!
Come to the Church's aid,
Enlighten your devoted children,
Strengthen the faithful throughout the world,
Let those who have drifted
Hear your call,
And may they who live as prisoners of evil
Be converted!

Pope John Paul II

Truly Participating

Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher of the Pontifical Household

The person who truly participates in Christmas is the one who is able to do today, centuries later, what he would have done had he been present on that day. The one who does what Mary has taught us to do: to kneel, to adore, to be silent!

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Australia**

- Please notify by email if you would like to be added to the regular emailing list.
- There is no subscription fee.
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- Donate to ITD via Ritchies Supermarkets Community Benefit program by nominating Into the Deep as your group, with CB number 81799, and shopping at your local Ritchies Supermarket (56 supermarkets throughout Eastern Australian) with your Community Benefit Card.

ITD is released on or around the first day of each month by email and on the website; printed copies about a week later. Deadline for contributions is one week before the end of the month (but preferably by the 15th of the month).

Editor - Janet Kingman

The purpose of ITD is to provide a forum for those who:

- no longer have a voice in Catholic Life, and other diocesan newspapers,
- wish to understand and defend the teachings of the Catholic Church,
- wish to support and defend those who are unjustly treated by Church bureaucrats and organisations,
- wish to campaign for the renewal of our Catholic schools,
- wish to promote Eucharistic adoration in all parishes,
- wish to have a means of support and contact for one another in remaining true to our Catholic faith.

Letters to the Editor

Readers are encouraged to contribute letters or articles. We cannot guarantee that all will be published, and we reserve the right to edit letters. The purpose of sharing letters is to pass on relevant information and suggestions for making positive changes, that is, in line with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. We live in joyful hope that the diocese we love can be faithful to the authentic tradition of the Church. As such, Into the Deep aims to be a messenger of hope and not of doom. Name and contact details must accompany letters. However, if there is sufficient reason, anonymity will be preserved when publishing. Letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of ITD.

Listening and Speaking

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

God speaks in the silence of the heart, and we listen.

And then we speak to God from the fullness of our heart, and God listens.

And this listening and this speaking is what prayer is meant to be... .